

EPA-PNL-5060

Gregg
Serenbetz/DC/USEPA/US
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To Aaron Setran, Abu Moulta-Ali, Allan Ota, Amy Miller, Ann Campbell, Ann Jacobs, Ann Williams, Barbara Keeler, Beverly Ethridge, Bob Lord, Brent Truskowski, Brian Frazer, Brian Ross, Brian Topping, Bruce Fergusson, Carolyn Hill, Carrie Wheeler, Catherine Garra, Cathy Milbourn, Charles Lane, Charles Rhodes, Chris Faulkner, Christopher Hunter, Christopher Muehlberger, Clay Miller, Cliff Rader, Concepcion Cahanap, Daniel Montella, Darryl Williams, David Allnutt, David Evans, David Pohle, David Rider, Deborah Hilsman, Delia Garcia, Denise Rigney, Diana Woods, Donna Downing, Donna Smith, Doug Jacobson, Eliodora Chamberlain, Elizabeth Goldmann, Elyse DiBiagio-Wood, Erin Foresman, Gail Harrison, Gregg Serenbetz, Gregory Peck, Howard Bunch, Hugh Barroll, James Vinch, Janice Cheng, Janice Sinclair, Jason Daniels, Jeanene Peckham, Jeff Kopf, Jeffrey Clay, Jeffrey Lapp, Jennifer Derby, Jessica Kao, Jill Minter, Jim Luey, Joel Jones, John Cantilli, John Forren, John Millett, John Olson, John Steketee, Jose Negron, Jose Soto, Joseph Theis, Julia McCarthy, Karen DelGrosso, Karen Schwinn, Karyn Wendelowski, Kate Anderson, Kathleen Drake, Kathleen Kutschenreuter, Kathy Hodgkiss, Kathy Hurd, Kevin Pierard, Krista Rave-Perkins, Laurie Kermish, Leslie Cronkhite, Lynda Hall, Marcela VonVacano, Margarete Heber, Margery Adams, Mario Paula, Mark Nuhfer, Mark Ryan, Mary Butterwick, Matt Schweisberg, May Smith, Michael Boydston, Michael Massey, Michael Szerlog, MichaelE Scozzafava, Miguel Flores, Mike Wylie, Morgan Jackson, Myra Price, Norma Ignasiak, Palmer Hough, Pam Marcus, Pamela Lazos, Patrick Rankin, Paul David, Paul Jones, Peggy Livingston, Peter Kalla, Phil North, Philip Schwartz, Phyllis Feinmark, Rachel Fertik, Raju Kakarlapudi, Ralph Spagnolo, Rebecca Dils, Rebecca Fox, Regina Poeske, Rhonda Evans, Richard Prather, Richard Sumner, Robert Leidy, Robert Montgomerie, Robert Wood, Roger Hancock, Ronald Mikulak, Rose Kwok, Sarah Fowler, Shawna Bergman, Shirley Deville, Stacie Craddock, Stacy Swartwood, Stafford Madison, Stephanie Wilson, Stephen Mendoza, Steven Kinberg, Steven Moores, Steven Neugeboren, Steven Sanders, Peter Stokely, Sue Elston, Suzanne Marr, Sylvia Horwitz, troy hill, Tami Sundquist, Tanya Code, Thomas Davenport, Thomas Nystrom, Tim Vendlinski, Tom Charlton, Tom Dickerson, Tom Slenkamp, Tom Welborn, Toney Ott, Tracie Nadeau, Veronica Fasselt, Vicky Johnson, Wanda Boyd, Wayne Gorski, William Hoffman, WilliamL Cox, Yvonne Vallette, Stephanie Chin, Brittany Croll, Ron Miedema, Barbara Finazzo, Damaris Christensen, ecochapman, Sonia Kassambara, mmrobertson, Mary Thiesing, Timothy Landers, Cynthia Cassel, Catherine Holston, Brad Horchem, Leah Medley, Rochele Kadish, Erin Flannery, Karen Reed, Jim Luey, kovac.steve

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Subject Wetlands E-Clips 5/14/10

E-Clips

5-14-10

Below are the introductory paragraphs of news articles that mention wetlands and have been in the press in recent days. The full articles are attached and/or linked, with file names that indicate the Region of the wetlands mentioned in the articles. If you are interested in having your name removed from the e-mail list, please notify Gregg Serenbetz in HQ's Wetlands Division.

Article Compilers: Brittany Croll, Erin Flannery, Damaris Christensen, Elizabeth Riley, Rose Kwok, and Regional Submissions

BP Oil Spill

[EPA authorizes dispersant testing for effects of Gulf oil spill underwater](#)

BNA – May 11, 2010

The Environmental Protection Agency has authorized BP plc to continue using dispersants on surface water and to conduct tests on use of dispersants underwater at the source of the ongoing oil leak in the Gulf of Mexico, the agency said. EPA's monitoring and assessment plan for full-scale subsea application of dispersants will not be implemented until initial testing demonstrates its effectiveness. No further use of dispersants underwater is planned until BP provides the results of these tests for EPA review, the agency said. All data will be given to the U.S. Coast Guard within 24 hours of its receipt, EPA said. The purpose of the plan is to monitor the movement and properties of a dispersed oil plume and to determine any associated ecological effects, according to EPA.

[Gulf spill brings calls for better safeguards, criticism of NEPA categorical exclusions](#)

BNA – May 11, 2010

The Minerals Management Service has been conducting environmental impact analyses for groups of offshore oil and natural gas leases and requiring companies to include worst-case scenarios in their spill response preparations, but the oil spill spreading from the site of the Deepwater Horizon rig has led to questions about whether the analyses and preparations were enough. In particular, some environmental advocates are troubled that BP Exploration & Production Inc., the leaseholder for the site of the Deepwater Horizon work, operated the site with a categorical exclusion that exempted the company from the obligation to develop an environmental impact statement (EIS) under the National Environmental Policy Act. Whether any analysis would prevent something like the Deepwater Horizon blowout from having a widespread impact is another issue open to question. Companies have large-scale cooperative arrangements to deploy spill response equipment, but there is no getting around the fact that it is hard to get large amounts of oil out of the water once it gets in, said Richard Ranger, a senior policy adviser at the American Petroleum Institute, an oil and gas trade association.

[Fragile Gulf ecosystem awaits worst of spill](#)

E&E News Land Letter – May 6, 2010

The Obama administration moved swiftly this week to respond to what could become the largest

and most damaging oil spill in U.S. history, dispatching resources from a half-dozen federal agencies to try to contain what is believed to be millions of gallons of light crude spewing up from the Gulf of Mexico seafloor. While the primary focus remained on helping BP PLC plug well heads under the company's destroyed Deepwater Horizon platform about 40 miles off the Louisiana coast, the Interior Department, Coast Guard and National Guard dispatched thousands of workers -- including volunteer fishermen -- to encircle some of the region's vital wetlands with floating booms designed to keep oil from penetrating bird and wildlife sanctuaries.

[Coastal state lawmakers introduce bills to increase oil spill liability to \\$10 billion](#)

BNA – May 6, 2010

Coastal state Democrats introduced bills in the House and Senate May 4 and May 5 that would raise the liability limit for economic damages resulting from an oil spill from \$75 million to \$10 billion. The sponsors said they want to make sure that U.K.-based oil giant BP pays fully for all damages associated with the major well blowout in the Gulf of Mexico that began two weeks ago. Experts predict that there will be protracted legal battles over who pays and for what, and the total bill could be from \$4 billion to \$14 billion. BP, as the primary leaseholder, must cover all of the cleanup costs that will result from the huge oil spill now lying off the Louisiana coast—a responsibility which BP said it accepts. However, there is a \$75 million cap on the responsible party for economic damages, such as lost business revenue from coastal fishing and tourism and declines in local and state tax revenues that may occur all along the Gulf Coast. The economic damages resulting from the oil spill could easily dwarf the cleanup costs, industry and government experts say.

['What people are fearing has not yet materialized'](#)

Greenwire – May 4, 2010

An estimated 210,000 gallons of oil a day continue to spew into the Gulf of Mexico from the sunken Deepwater Horizon rig, but the full environmental and economic impact of the accident is not yet clear. Forecasts have been grim about the damage to fisheries, wetlands and the region's economy, and experts are carefully eyeing wind patterns as the slick threatens to creep toward the Atlantic Coast. But the spill is not yet among the worst oil accidents in history. The complete effects of the spill depend on interlinked factors including the weather, ocean currents, properties of the oil involved and if efforts to stem the tide of oil and remediate its effects pay off. Yesterday the wind was pushing the slick away from the gulf's clockwise loop current, which had threatened to carry it toward the beaches and coral reefs of the Florida Keys. While experts agree the spill is severe, and note that oil has already been found in some of the sensitive marshes at the tip of Louisiana, the effects are not yet comparable to some of the worst spills in history, and some experts are cautiously optimistic about addressing the spill.

[Unpredictable current is wild card in disaster scenarios](#)

Greenwire – May 5, 2010

An undersea conveyor belt to Florida is approaching the Gulf Coast oil spill, and should it stretch past its typical bounds, oil from the BP PLC accident, blobbing placidly off the Louisiana coast, could soon stream into the Florida Keys and up the United States' Eastern Seaboard. Or the current could miss the spill entirely. Government officials and scientists from Mississippi to Florida are holding their collective breath to see whether a strong but unpredictable current in the Gulf of Mexico, known as the Loop Current, will continue to expand north toward Louisiana.

Two days ago -- the latest time for which satellite data are available -- the current sat 125 miles south of the spill, its rotating tendrils licking at the slick's eastern edge. "It is a very important concern," said Bob Weisberg, an oceanographer at the University of South Florida, who has long warned of the flow's potential impact on his state. "The Loop Current is actually moving toward the oil."

[Oil washes ashore in La. as BP prepares to lower containment dome](#)

Greenwire – May 6, 2010

Amid the first confirmed reports of oil hitting shore, a device designed to contain the massive Gulf of Mexico oil spill reached the leak site today. A patch of oil from the massive spill in the Gulf of Mexico was found today on Louisiana's Freemason Island, CNN reported. Two Coast Guard teams scrambled to reset protective booms around the island, located in the Chandeleur Islands off Louisiana. The amount of oil that reached shore was not immediately known. Trace amounts of sheen from the undersea gusher reportedly has reached the shores of southeastern Louisiana over the past week, but the landfall reported today marks the first confirmation of oil hitting the shore, BP PLC spokesman John Curry told CNN. BP expects to lower a containment dome to the seabed today in an effort to control the largest leak. The dome would sit on top of the flowing oil and channel it to the surface where it can be treated. BP hopes to have the dome operating by Monday. A second containment structure is under construction for the smaller of the two remaining oil leaks, while a third leak was shut off this week with a valve.

[Fla. says spill protection plans lacking](#)

UPI NewsTrack – May 3, 2010

Florida officials said a BP plan to protect Florida's coast from an oil spill was lacking and didn't allow input from experts on the state's coastal areas. State Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Mike Sole said he told the oil giant's top executive and Coast Guard Rear Adm. Mary Landry that decisions concerning Florida were being made elsewhere, the St. Petersburg (Fla.) Times reported Sunday. I told them, 'Florida is important. We have 770 miles of shoreline to protect. I'm concerned that we're not getting enough focus on Florida,' Sole said. State officials said they were concerned the coast at Pensacola would be first Florida coast affected by a spill from a sunken oil rig that exploded April 20 in the Gulf of Mexico. Officials said projections indicated the oil could reach the Pensacola shore by Wednesday.

[Alabama concentrates on protecting wetlands](#)

Sun Herald – April 30, 2010

Boats strung oil-absorbing booms along Alabama's coast Thursday to protect sensitive marshes and bayous, but plans call for letting any oil that reaches the beaches to wash onto the sugar-white sand. Officials said beaches are far easier to clean than wetlands, so the work was concentrated mainly on areas that could be damaged most. "If it gets on the sand, you basically just scoop it up with a loader and haul it away. It's really not that big of a deal. Wetlands are a far different thing," said George Crozier, director of the Dauphin Island Sea Lab. In Orange Beach more than 100 boat captains volunteered their vessels to help lay long strands of oil-absorbent material. At Alabama Pass, a link between the Gulf and delicate inland waters, a barge loaded with oil-absorbing rolls sat ready should the slick move that far east. A Mobile law firm already has filed two federal class-action lawsuits on behalf of shrimpers, oyster harvesters, fishing fleets, seafood processors and distributors who already have been hurt by the spill. Gov.

Bob Riley said his office would establish a framework by next week for business owners harmed by the spill to seek compensation from BP.

[Emergency cash for coast sought - Group raises alarm on restoration work](#)

Times-Picayune – May 2, 2010

Calling the Deepwater Horizon incident as significant an event as Hurricane Katrina, the Environmental Defense Fund on Saturday called on Congress to pass a \$4 billion emergency supplemental appropriation to restore coastal wetlands in Louisiana in response to the catastrophic release of oil in the Gulf of Mexico. Much of the money would be used to accelerate construction of five major restoration projects authorized by Congress in 2007 as part of the Louisiana Coastal Area Ecosystem Restoration Plan. "If there's a time for Congress to recognize that this fragile resource has a restoration plan and to really fund it and move forward, this would be it," said Paul Harrison, senior director for the Mississippi River and East Coast at EDF's Center for Rivers and Deltas.

[Recovery efforts after Gulf Coast oil spill could be as damaging as its cause](#)

Science Daily – May 4, 2010

While the initial effects of the massive Gulf Coast oil leak could be devastating to coastal wetlands and beaches, the subsequent cleanup could be even more damaging to the sensitive ecosystems, says a wetlands expert in Indiana University's School of Public and Environmental Affairs (SPEA). "Let's say that they're able to stop the leak, the best thing they can do is to try to intercept the oil before it comes ashore ... Sometimes the cleanup itself can be as hard on the environment as the oil itself," said Christopher B. Craft, the Janet Duey Professor in Rural Land Policy at IU Bloomington and past president of the Society of Wetland Scientists, an international organization devoted to sound wetland science, management and stewardship. "They do things like pressure washing rocks and sand, and any kind of attached organisms get blown off," he added. "They may end up excavating sand off beaches. The marshes, which really dominate Louisiana coastline, are mostly vegetation and cleanup there is really going to be problematic." It will take several years for affected Gulf Coast areas to be cleaned and recover, and will depend on how much oil actually comes ashore. "Nature will recover on its own, but in the absence of some human help, it will take a long time," he said.

General Interest

[Senate Environment Committee starts work on Water Resources Development Bill](#)

BNA – May 7, 2010

Senate Environment and Public Works Chairman Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) said May 6 that she is hopeful the Senate can pass water resource development legislation this year to reauthorize the projects and programs of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Speaking at the committee's initial hearing to develop a Water Resources Development Act of 2010, Boxer said the bill would create jobs, improve navigation routes, prevent floods, and restore ecosystems. Boxer said she hoped the bill would enjoy the same bipartisan support it had in 2007, when the legislation had enough support in the Senate to override a presidential veto. In a recent report, the Inland Waterways Users Board and the Army Corps recommended a 30 percent to 45 percent increase in the fuels tax that the industry pays as a way to increase investment in water resource development projects, according to Matt Woodruff, who represented Kirby Corp.—the largest

operator of inland tank barges—and is a member of the Inland Waterways Users Board. “We're willing to accept this level of tax increase if its part of the comprehensive plan to ensure future reliability of the system,” Woodruff said.

[Inhofe, Boxer push for 2011 WRDA, gird against critics](#)

E&E Daily – May 7, 2010

Odds are slim that Congress pushes through a massive package of water infrastructure projects by the end of the year. But what does not get finished this year could resume in 2011, when Republicans are expected to have gained seats in the House and Senate. Congress last passed a WRDA in 2007. To compare progress, by May of that year, the Senate passed a \$14 billion version of the bill. This year, Environment and Public Works Chairwoman Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) and Inhofe, the EPW Committee ranking member, only recently put out the call for senators to submit their project wish lists, setting a May 18 deadline. By the time the reconciled version of the 2007 WRDA passed the Senate that September, it had grown to \$23 billion and amassed support overwhelming enough to override President George W. Bush's veto and become law that November.

[Interior outlines proposals for revised rule to protect streams from surface mining](#)

BNA – April 30, 2010

The Interior Department will revise its stream buffer zone rule to give the rule much broader scope, require more extensive monitoring and baseline data from mining companies, and increase mitigation requirements, according to a notice scheduled for publication in the April 30 *Federal Register*. The rule revision, under authority of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, was triggered especially by opposition to mountaintop coal mining in Appalachia, although the new rule will apply nationwide.

The purpose of the notice was to announce that Interior's Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement will prepare an environmental impact statement to analyze the potential effects of the new proposed rule, which is expected in early 2011. But the office also used the occasion to summarize many of the elements of the changes that the office has decided to put forward. The Office of Surface Mining had already begun briefing industry officials and environmental advocacy groups. Both of those camps are expressing skepticism about the “concepts” that the office has been discussing in preparation for proposing a “comprehensive stream protection” rule.

[Senate EPW panel to discuss WRDA's effects on economy](#)

E&E Daily – May 3, 2010

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee this week meets to discuss the economic rationale behind a comprehensive new water resources bill. Senators will meet Thursday to address the Water Resources Development Act, which authorizes infrastructure projects from the Army Corps of Engineers. They will examine job creation and economic development impacts of water resources projects, including ports, inland waterways, flood control and ecosystem restoration. Janet Kavinsky, director of Transportation Infrastructure for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, said she plans to impress upon lawmakers the important role that passing WRDA this year would have on promoting jobs and spurring the economy. "Our ports, inland waterways and Great Lakes are extremely important to the economy, especially our export economy," said Kavinsky, who will be testifying. "It seems to me we've gotten to the point where we only deal

with infrastructure if there's a crisis ... we want to show you need continued investment in maintaining and modernizing infrastructure or it does have an economic impact."

International

[Nigerian islands lost due to erosion, rising seas](#)

Climatewire – May 11, 2010

It appears that Nigeria has lost some islands in the Niger Delta region due to erosion from the Atlantic Ocean. The revelation was announced at a workshop on the problems of climate change for coastal states in Nigeria. Victor Fodeke, head of the Federal Ministry of Environment's Special Climate Change Unit, said the loss of the islands was stunning and blamed it on global warming. It appears people who were living or worked on the island have relocated, he said. Twenty years ago, two professors at the Nigerian Institute for Oceanography and Marine Research had warned that Nigeria was losing coastal land at an alarming rate and there was a chance that the islands could erode. Chidi Ibe and Benjamin Akpati said that weathering from the ocean, along with rising waters, could endanger the islands. At this year's conference, coastal states were echoing those warnings, saying they felt threatened by rising sea levels that could cause more erosion. The Heinrich Böll Foundation, which helped present the conference, issued abatement options, including building barriers along the coast, reinforcing reservoirs and raising roads and trail lines. Another option being considered is a biotechnical intervention, such as planting mangrove species that are more able to adapt to coastal areas.

[Fears That a Lush Land May Lose a Foul Fertilizer](#)

May 4, 2010 – New York Times

For 100 years, Mexico City has flushed its wastewater north to irrigate the farmland of Hidalgo State. This foul cascade, which the farmers call "the black waters," flows through a latticework of canals and then trickles over the fields. So when word got out that the government was finally going to build a giant wastewater treatment plant, one might have expected the farmers around here to be excited. Instead, they were suspicious.

Region 1

[Army to buy, preserve land](#)

Hartford Courant – May 5, 2010

The U.S. Army plans to buy 52 undeveloped acres on Boardman Lane for about \$1.4 million to compensate for wetlands destruction at the construction site of its new training center. The land purchase, which could happen as late as September, would allow the Army to mitigate the loss of about 1.5 acres of wetlands at Louis F. Cucia Park, a former industrial site that will house the Army Reserve's new \$51.5 million training center, said Todd Hornback, a spokesman for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Army - required by the federal Clean Water Act to compensate for wetlands destruction - plans to preserve the Boardman Lane parcel against future development, Hornback said.

Region 3

[Final Bay restoration strategy will seek permanent protection of 2 million acres](#)

BNA – May 10, 2010

The federal government's plan for restoring the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem will call for the permanent conservation of 2 million acres of land within the watershed by 2025, an official with the Chesapeake Bay Commission said at a commission meeting May 7. The final goal is somewhat lower than the 2.3 million acres proposed Nov. 9, 2009, when the Environmental Protection Agency and several Cabinet agencies released their initial proposals for vastly accelerating the cleanup of the Chesapeake Bay. President Obama declared the bay a national treasure May 12, 2009, and ordered the agencies to issue a final restoration strategy on May 12, 2010 (Exec. Order No. 13,508). Ann Swanson, executive director of the tri-state Chesapeake Bay Commission, told lawmakers and regulatory agency officials from Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia that the strategy will also call for adding 300 public access points to the bay and its tributaries. Most of the watershed lies within the three states. It also includes the District of Columbia and parts of Delaware, New York, and West Virginia.

[EPA schedules hearing to gather comments on plan to restrict or halt mountaintop mine](#)

BNA – May 4, 2010

The Environmental Protection Agency Region 3 will hold a public hearing May 18 in Charleston, W.Va., on the agency's proposal to restrict or prohibit mining at Arch Coal Inc.'s Spruce No. 1 mountaintop mine. In a notice scheduled for publication in the May 4 Federal Register, EPA said the purpose of the meeting is to obtain public testimony. Any person may appear at the hearing and submit oral and written statements or data. To maximize the number of individuals who are able to speak at the hearing, oral statements will be limited to two minutes per person. There will be no direct questioning of any hearing participant, although the presiding officer may make appropriate inquiries of any such participant. EPA in September took its first step toward exercising a "veto" authority over the mountaintop mine, which has been operated since 2007 by Arch Coal subsidiary Mingo Logan Coal Co. using a dredge-and-fill permit issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. On March 26, EPA said it would, for the first time, use its authority under Section 404(c) of the Clean Water Act to limit or halt a mining operation under a permit already issued. Arch Coal responded by asking a federal court April 2 to declare that EPA lacked authority to revoke or veto a dredge-and-fill permit after it has been issued.

[Waterfowl wonderland- Local groups are vital to Pymatuning wetland restoration](#)

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette – May 2, 2010

Wetlands have an image problem. Most people are not impressed by shallow water, mud flats, bugs and brush. Ducks, however, need the soggy spaces. And then there are duck hunters, who love all manner of marshes and swamps. That love is clearly genuine in western Pennsylvania, where wetlands are a scarce cog in the mixed landscape. It is genuine enough to inspire the Pymatuning Partnership, a high-energy assembly of hunters, businesses and organizations which has set for itself the goal of restoring wetland habitats at the Pymatuning Wildlife Management Area in Crawford County. When Pymatuning Reservoir was dammed in 1935, the soggy ground around it became an important nesting area and migration stopover for ducks and geese. The Pennsylvania Game Commission enhanced the habitat in the 1960s by constructing small "wildlife friendly" impoundments. Together with the nearby Hartstown Swamp and Geneva Marsh, each parts of State Game Lands 213 and 214, the Pymatuning region offered over 15,000 acres of publicly owned wetlands for wildlife.

Region 4

[Response to Nashville flooding is under scrutiny](#)

Greenwire- May 10, 2010

Middle Tennessee's worst flood on record since its dams were built is leading to questions about the performance of the Army Corps of Engineers during the rains.

U.S. Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) is calling for a Senate committee hearing to understand what happened during the floods. Some business owners are publicly crying out over emergency personnel assertions that the area would be fine. But the Army Corps says there is nothing it would have done differently and says its actions prevented more destruction. Initially, dams were expected to handle any overflow from heavy rains, but as the forecast worsened, authorities realized they would have to open spill gates to prevent flooding. Some question the decision to raise the gates so late (about 1 p.m. CDT on Saturday), but dam officials say that with the forecast they had, releasing water any earlier could have led to more flooding downstream. On Saturday night, officials had to make 10 adjustments to the gate.

Region 5

[Wetlands project turned over to Bay City group](#)

ConnectMidMichigan.com - May 6, 2010

A Michigan conservation group will take control of 100 acres of wetlands that were the result of a legal settlement between a Midland developer and the federal government. A federal judge in Detroit has approved the selection of the Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy, based in Bay City.

Region 6

[A closet enviro has plans for rebuilding battered La. marshes](#)

Greenwire- May 4, 2010

You'd better not call Richard Blink Jr. an environmentalist, at least not here in southern Louisiana. The 23-year-old Empire native drives a crew boat by day, shuttling workers to drilling rigs and oil production platforms off the coast. But his passion is protecting and restoring his state's fragile coastal wetlands, which sprawl for miles around the narrow strip of land hugging the banks of the Mississippi River. "I get to go to work every day and enjoy the sunset and nature," Blink said last weekend as he guided his stepfather's oyster boat through the wetlands that stretch from the east bank of the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico, where a massive oil spill is threatening the natural resources he loves. Crude has been spilling into the Gulf since the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig exploded and capsized there nearly two weeks ago. BP PLC -- the company responsible for paying for the cleanup -- called Blink yesterday and told him that he would take the oyster boat and his stepfather, a Croatian immigrant, would take a larger shrimping boat to join a local armada with fishermen hired by the oil giant to help with the spill-response effort. So far, the company has contracted with 500 boat owners to help with the response, a BP spokesman said yesterday.

[EPA awards over \\$380,000 to map, classify wetlands in New Mexico](#)

US Fed News – May 6, 2010

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has awarded \$386,847 to the New Mexico

Environment Department (NMED). The funds will be used by NMED to map and classify wetlands in the Canadian River drainage, including playas and isolated wetlands in northeastern New Mexico. The funds will also be used to acquire imagery and assemble a geo-database, conduct pre-and post-mapping field reviews, and develop a draft landcover classification for the project area.

Region 7

[Volunteers turn one man's vision into success story](#)

Lincoln Journal Star – April 17, 2010

In the last 20 years, Platte River Basin Environments has conserved 30,000 acres of wildlife habitat in the Nebraska Panhandle. Those lands not only support a biologically unique ecosystem and an assortment of wildlife species, they're open to public use. What's more, the nonprofit organization based in Scottsbluff has helped private landowners restore and protect habitat on another 20,000 acres

Region 8

[Nonprofit must sell land in corporate farming case](#)

Associated Press – May 14, 2010

A Minneapolis nonprofit that develops duck nesting grounds must sell a 949-acre tract in North Dakota because of state restrictions on corporate ownership of agricultural land, the North Dakota Supreme Court said in an opinion released Thursday

[Program reopens to help farmers, ranchers dealing with Devils Lake](#)

Grand Forks Herald – May 8, 2010

Farmers and ranchers in the Devils Lake Basin who have land inundated by flooding could be eligible for some financial relief, after last week's U.S. Department of Agriculture decision to reopen the Wetland Reserve Program to farmers in the Prairie Pothole Region.

[Increase in wind turbines concerns conservationists](#)

Minnesota Public Radio – May 7, 2010

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently released new guidelines that aim to limit destruction of wildlife habitat when new wind farms are built. But scientists still don't know much about the long-term effects of wind turbines on wildlife. So researchers are studying a variety of bird species to determine if they are killed by spinning turbines, or avoid habitat near them

[Shrinking lake](#)

Salt Lake Tribune – May 3, 2010

The Great Salt Lake is shrinking, taking vital wetlands with it. While the lake level historically rises and falls dramatically, warming temperatures and dwindling snowpack could mean a permanently smaller lake. If that happens, millions of birds and other wildlife could lose vital food, shelter and nesting areas. The average lake level is 4,200 feet above sea level. The lake now stands at 4,196.5 feet; its lowest level was 4,191.35 feet in 1963. Then the lake covered only 950 square miles, a dramatic drop from its average of about 1,700 square miles. The lake is fed by rivers and streams that get their water from mountain snowfall to the east of Salt Lake Valley.

The in-flowing fresh water creates marshlands around the east and north shores of the lake, and, as the lake level drops, the wetlands that support millions of birds begin to dry up.

Region 9

[Impasse between farmer, feds puts wetlands' return on hold](#)

San Francisco Chronicle – May 5, 2010

The federal government's dream of restoring a sprawling North Bay island to wetlands is on hold indefinitely because of an impasse with a hay farmer whose family has toiled the island for three generations. Jim Haire and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have failed to agree on a price for Haire's 1,100-acre farm, which makes up a quarter of Skaggs Island, a former Navy outpost described by environmentalists as the linchpin in San Pablo Bay wetland restoration. "We will not move forward with the restoration. We will maintain the island as it is," said Mendel Stewart, manager of the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge. "But it's not what this place should be. It should be a wetland."

Haire, 68, agreed that the best use of the land is a tidal marsh for migrating birds, salmon and other animals that have historically relied on the nutrient-rich wetlands formed by the Napa River and Sonoma Creek's convergence with the bay. What he doesn't agree on, however, is the price. The government, which is bound by law to pay fair market value, is offering \$6,000 an acre, an amount officials say is close to what other farmers in the area have received. Haire said the value is at least three times that, enough to buy comparable property elsewhere, replace his two homes, barns, grain elevator and other outbuildings, and cover trucking costs he'd incur by potentially having to ship his hay longer distances.

[Ariz. desalting plant begins operation, replacement flows for wetland secured](#)

E&E News Land Letter – May 6, 2010

The Bureau of Reclamation this week flipped the switch on the dormant Yuma Desalting Plant in Arizona, launching a yearlong test to determine whether the 18-year-old facility can finally live up to its promise to help solve the Colorado River Basin's water supply challenges. The pilot run, which began Monday, will also be a test of a landmark agreement involving the United States, Mexico and a coalition of environmental groups to protect a vast Mexican wetland that depends on the salty agricultural runoff that will now be diverted to the plant, where it will be cleaned and released into the Colorado River. The \$250 million plant was built in 1992 to help meet treaty obligations requiring the United States to send 1.5 million acre-feet of clean Colorado River water to Mexico each year. But nine months after signing the treaty, plant managers shut down the facility after a flood damaged an intake canal. Ample flows in the Colorado River Basin in the ensuing years rendered the plant unnecessary.

Region 10

[Dicks, Moran wants 1M acres in Alaska off-limits to hardrock mining](#)

E&E Daily – April 22, 2010

The current and former leaders of the House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee want the Interior Department to keep hardrock mining off limits in Alaska's Bristol Bay watershed over concerns it could harm one of the country's most productive fisheries.

Chairman Jim Moran (D-Va.) and former Chairman Norm Dicks (D-Wash.) sent a letter this

week to Bureau of Land Management Director Bob Abbey asking that the current prohibition on hardrock mining in the region be maintained until further analyses are completed. In question is 1.1 million acres of BLM land covered in a resource management plan for the bay completed late last year. While mineral development was barred on the land for more than three decades because of unresolved land claims, the management plan finalized just two months before President George W. Bush left office recommended opening the lands for leasing. The lands covered in the plan are close to the proposed Pebble Mine, a giant gold, copper and molybdenum deposit on state lands. Environmentalists have worked to block Pebble Mine amid fears it could lead to the industrialization of Bristol Bay at the cost of its pristine watershed.

[Alaska agency reinstates permits required for water, land use at planned Pebble Mine](#)

BNA – April 28, 2010

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources announced April 23 that it had reinstated land-use and water-use permits needed by the Pebble Limited Partnership to conduct exploration work at the site of the proposed open-pit Pebble copper and gold mine.

The permits were suspended in February after DNR and other state agencies learned that the Pebble Partnership had taken water from 45 unpermitted locations over a time period spanning 2007 to 2009. The reinstatement came after the DNR and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game approved the Pebble Partnership's revised water-withdrawal plan, DNR said in a statement. That revision was made in accordance with a settlement agreement on the unpermitted withdrawals. As part of that settlement, the Pebble Partnership paid a \$45,000 fine. The partnership also agreed to several stipulations, to be included in the new water withdrawal plan, to help prevent future violations. One stipulation requires that the Pebble Partnership designate a site field operators coordinator and surveyor to oversee activities and make sure that they are in accordance with permits. Another stipulation requires the partnership to designate a site environmental compliance officer to develop and supervise a training program to make sure that all field workers are educated about the permits and how to comply with them.